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*The Alchemist*

By Paulo Coehlo

**Summary:** Santiago ultimately decides to travel to Egypt and pursue his Personal Legend, which is to find a certain treasure at the Pyramids. He is immediately uncomfortable with the native language, Arabic, and soon finds a friend who speaks Spanish like him. Santiago confides in this boy, who agrees to be his guide to the Pyramids, but the boy soon takes all the money Santiago has and runs. Santiago finds work with a local crystal merchant who is both timid and narrow minded. The merchant is very reluctant to act on any of the marketing suggestions that Santiago makes, showing the degree to which the merchant is set in his ways. The deeply religious merchant reveals his fear of accomplishing his Personal Legend, and is content to simply dream about it; Santiago reciprocates by explaining his Personal Legend of finding treasure at the Pyramids. For his toil in the crystal shop, Santiago soon earns enough money to purchase another flock of sheep and join a caravan traveling across the Sahara desert. The section leaves off with Santiago’s departure from the safety of the crystal merchant’s shop out into the dangerous city.

**Analysis:** Santiago experiences disappointment and frustration when he is cheated. He builds a friendship with the crystal merchant. He is persistent in his journey towards his Personal Legend. I enjoyed this section of *The Alchemist* because the reader can sympathize with feelings and experiences of the protagonist. I have certainly known disappointment, friendship, and hope within my own life, so the story takes on another dimension when the reader can make genuine connections throughout the piece. This section of the novel held true to the observations in my first post; Paulo Coehlo’s story isn’t complex and doesn’t utilize a multitude of characters. The story line is so simplistic that it could mostly likely be comprehended by small children; the beauty of this book is in the emotions and ideas presented. *The Alchemist* makes the reader discover their own Personal Legend, and decide if they have bought into ‘the world’s greatest lie.’ I have thoroughly enjoyed this book because of the connections I can make with the main character.

**Application:** *The Alchemist* has proven that man’s reluctance to change has spanned time and culture. In the piece, the crystal merchant becomes satisfied with his success; he isn’t looking to break tradition or try anything unorthodox. The book states, “I’m doing much better, and soon you’ll be able to return to your sheep. Why ask more out of life (52)?” It is this mentality which proves that the merchant is set in his ways. This has transcended time because even today, man is reluctant to change. We take the same routes to work and school. We flock to the same seat. We park in the same parking spot. There is comfort in having a routine, and this has not changed. With respect to human nature, the piece reveals man’s need for companionship; Santiago and the merchant become very close throughout the year which they are together. The examples above also prove that it is in the human nature to repeat a set routine. Additionally, Santiago’s pursuit of his Personal Legend and the merchant’s lack of pursuit of his Legend illustrate the variance in human behavior. Some individuals take more initiative in achieving their goals than others; man has differing levels of motivation. Lastly, injustice continues to be a component of human ideals. In the text, Santiago has all of money stolen from him; even in my neighborhood this week, there have been numerous break-ins and burglaries. *The Alchemist* has shown that a reluctance to change has spanned time and culture, while humans also continue to seek companionship, possess differing degrees of motivation, and commit injustices.